

THE ECONOMY OF INDO-CHINA

tions for tourists. In Indo-Chinese literature this country is known as the *brousse*, and it supports a scattered and diverse population of about fifteen persons to the square kilometre. It also served as a very inauspicious region for military operations during the pacification.

The great rivers of Tonkin are imaginatively called Red, Black, and Clear, and they are orientated towards Southern China, whose economy is linked by geography to Tonkin, just as Laos is soldered to Siam. The failure of geographical barriers to coincide with political frontiers has had an enormous influence on Indo-China's history. This factor has permitted the century-long infiltration of peoples into the peninsula, and accounts for the present jumble of ethnological groups. The diversity of peoples in French Indo-China is only matched by their uneven distribution over its surface.

The violence of the Tonkinese rivers is in keeping with the excesses of the climate. Typhoons and inundations from the monsoons alternate with droughts. In contrast with the greater regularity and mildness of the South, Tonkin and North Annam are a prey to incalculable natural forces which make human effort seem futile and unavailing. The stimulus of a colder climate, the competition of a denser population, the struggle with implacably hostile forces, have all left an imprint on the Tonkinese character, important in estimating that group's economic productivity.

Forests

Formerly forests covered the entire country's surface, but about half of them have been cut down in the most accessible regions. Natives have abused these forests since time immemorial. They cut down trees either to get new land for agriculture or simply for

their immediate
needs. The primitive mountain peoples have been the
most destructive
in burning the forests to fertilize the ground. After a
few years they
abandon the place and repeat the process elsewhere.
An enormous
grass, called *trann*, grows up in these abandoned places,
which is the bane
of the farmers' existence. Animals, too, crop the young
plants. Nowadays
this lack of forest land is being keenly felt, for the
new industries
and towns have an ever-increasing need of wood.

The French were the first to take steps towards
forest conservation.
In 1902 a group was formed to attempt reforestation.
This work was
long hampered by local resistance and poverty of
means. Even prior
to this the Admirals in 1862 had forbidden the
cutting of certain
growths, and thirteen years later authorized the
regular exploitation

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